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JULY 1996



Complete Long Beach
Pro Tournament Results

THE DUELIST SIDEBOARD

PREVIEW

Magic World Championships



Shawn "Hammer" Regnier

**"Hammer" Regnier
Slams the Field
in Long Beach**

**U.S. Champion
Mark Justice Analyzes
the Booster Draft's
Final Day**

ALSO INSIDE

**Who's Who
at this Year's
U.S. Nationals**

**Team
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**Arena League
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THE DUELIST SIDEBOARD

Volume 1, Issue 1 • JULY 1996

- 2 **From the Top**
Welcome to The Duelist Sideboard
- 4 **All in the Family**
Magic forms a bond in many households
- 6 **Support Your Local Players**
Team sponsorships are starting to emerge on the Pro Tour level

TOURNAMENT PREVIEWS

- 10 **U.S. Nationals**
Who's who this year?
- 11 **World Championships**
Magic's most competitive international event



LONG BEACH PRO TOUR COVERAGE

- 12 **Magic Pro Tour Sets Sail Aboard the Queen Mary**

281 top-notch competitors go to war

- 14 **Luck of the Draw**

Mark Justice analyzes the booster draft's final day

- 16 **'I Could've Easily Won'**

Tom Guevin drops a 3-2 heartbreaker

- 17 **Tough as Nails**

"Hammer" Regnier takes top honors

- 18 **Richer by the Round**

Not every player can emerge as champion

- 20 **Rising Stars**

Say hello to junior finalists Max Szlagor and Paul McCabe



PHOTO COURTESY OF QUEEN MARY SEAPORT



- 21 **Open Division Participants**
Complete results of who finished where
- 22 **Lethal Weapons**
Drafting strategies proved critical aboard the Queen Mary
- 23 **Best Draft Formulas**
Card-by-card listing of the top decks at Long Beach

OTHER NEWS

- 24 **Arena League**
Retailer league play commences in August
- 27 **How Do I Qualify for the \$1,000,000 Magic Pro Tour?**
- 28 **DCI Update**
News from around the TCG World



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INSET PHOTO BY RICK ARONS.

From the Top

Welcome to *The Duelist Sideboard*, the sister publication to *The Duelist*™ and the first-ever Wizards of the Coast® (WotC)-produced magazine devoted solely to covering tournament play. With the advent of WotC's \$1,000,000 **Magic: The Gathering® Pro Tour™** earlier this year, some influential insiders at WotC thought it might be a good idea to launch a journal that would not only commemorate each of the exciting stops along the 1996 Pro Tour schedule, but also preview some upcoming **Magic** competitions.

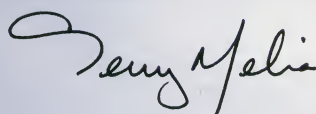
So far, the Pro Tour has produced a pair of homespun champions: New York champion Michael Loconto, a 26-year-old social worker from Grafton, MA; and Long Beach (CA) winner Shawn "Hammer" Regnier, a 27-year-old former arm wrestler who currently makes his living running "Hammer's Comics," a popular shop in Manchester, NH. Loconto earned his title (and \$8,500) in modified Type II play, while Regnier secured \$17,000 by outsmarting several foes in a difficult booster draft.

Part of the appeal of the **Magic** Pro Tour is the fact that its play formats consistently change, thereby testing players' overall knowledge and skill of the game, while hopefully avoiding repeat winners from one tournament to the next. For instance, at the third professional tournament scheduled to take place during the Origins™ convention in Columbus, OH, over Fourth of July weekend, the playing environment will consist of Type II *Ice Age*™/*Alliances*™ constructed deck. With \$155,000 in cash prizes and scholarships being awarded (\$22,000 alone going to the Open division champion), the dueling is sure to be fierce.

Coinciding with the third professional tournament will be several other WotC-sponsored events at Origins, creating a sort of gamer's paradise, complete with fireworks. First and foremost, the U.S. National Championships will be held (actual playing times will not conflict with the Pro Tour's schedule) with the likes of defending champion Mark Justice and runner-up Henry Stern anxious to make it back to the finals. In addition, Wizards of the Coast will sponsor several ancillary events, including: Type I, Type II, Pro-Am, and booster-draft **Magic** tournaments; **Netrunner**™ sealed-deck and constructed-deck competitions; a **Vampire: The Eternal Struggle**™ tournament, and a sneak preview of *The Sabbat*™, the first stand-alone expansion set for V:TES; and a **Magic: The Puzzling Game Show**, hosted by Mark Rosewater.

Inside this 32-page premiere effort, you'll discover previews of both the U.S. Nationals (p. 10) and World Championships (p. 11). You'll also find Justice's in-depth analysis of the booster draft's championship matches at Long Beach (p. 14); the emergence of team sponsorships on the Pro Tour (p. 6); qualifying requirements for the Pro Tour (p. 27); and, of course, complete results of the second professional tournament, which was held aboard the majestic Queen Mary ocean-liner in May.

The players are terrific sports and the competition top-notch. We hope our coverage of the **Magic** Pro Tour receives similar ratings.



Terry Melia, Editor



"Hammer" had plenty to say before, during, and after the Long Beach finals.

THE DUELIST SIDEBOARD

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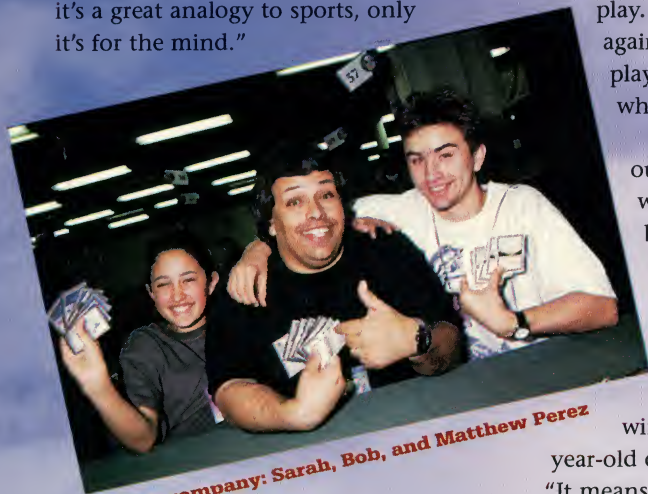
All in the Family

Magic forms a bond in many households

❖ by Terry Melia

Thirteen-year-old Sarah Perez loves to play soccer. She's a seven-year veteran of sliding tackles and plays center halfback at Seattle's Inglewood Junior High. Her older brother Matthew, 15, is another soccer buff who's a fullback for Eastlake High. When the Perez siblings aren't executing headers and corner kicks, they're usually engrossed in a strategic game of **Magic: The Gathering**.

"It just depends on the season," said their father, Bob Perez, a 43-year-old software developer who doubles as a **Magic**-playing dad. "[When not playing soccer] **Magic** helps keep their competitive spirit alive. They want to be the best that they can and this game helps them strategize toward that end. I think it's a great analogy to sports, only it's for the mind."



Three's company: Sarah, Bob, and Matthew Perez

The Perez trio made history (of sorts) by being one of two families that boasted a father, son, and daughter who all qualified to compete in the second professional **Magic** tournament in Long Beach, CA. They qualified by placing high in one of the regional competitions in April held at the Wizards of the Coast® Tournament Center. All three had participated in the first professional tournament in NYC last February, but the qualifying requirements for New York weren't quite as strict.

"I enjoyed playing in New York,"

said Sarah, one of only nine females who braved the Big Apple's Type II modified format, "and I really didn't feel that intimidated. I just wanted to do well."

In New York, she finished 51st in the Junior division (out of 108 competitors). At Long Beach, she placed 72nd out of 102 players. Matthew, meanwhile, also competing with the Juniors, dropped from 35th in New York to 51st in Long Beach. The change in tournament format to a booster draft was truly a challenge.

"I think that a lot of it just depends on luck, but winning isn't everything," said Matthew. "To tell you the truth, I'm not really top-notch like some of the players here. I just like to play. If I happen to get paired up against one of the best, I'll just play my best—and I won't whine."

Bob Perez finished 119th out of the 179 competitors who started the Long Beach booster draft. While he would've liked to place higher, he was happy with the thrill of competing—and the joy it brings his family, including his wife, Dorothy, and seven-year-old daughter, Rebecca.

"It means a lot to us because we love **Magic** as a game and we play it together as a family," he said. "What's wonderful about it is how many family activities are there that are fun for the whole family, are something that the kids *really* want to do, and are good for your mind?"

The second **Magic**-playing family that participated in Long Beach was another hailing from Seattle: the Suvers—Chris, Max, and Marie. Chris, a 41-year-old computer businessman from Bothell, has been playing **Magic** for two years. Asked what the learning curve was like, he said:



Father knows best: Marie, Chris, and Max Suver

"It went pretty well. We made plenty of mistakes in the beginning, but we just started to figure out what the decks were like and what cards we needed most."

Max, 15, was the only member of either family who qualified for Long Beach by placing as a semifinalist in New York (and earning a \$2,500 scholarship). Both Chris and Marie earned their slots by placing high in one of the regional qualifiers at the WotC Tournament Center.

"Having a father and sister who play the game gives me the opportunity to play against somebody basically whenever I want," said Max, who finished a distant 54th in Long Beach. "We're able to work on different decks together so we can figure things out a lot quicker that way."

The Suvers put in plenty of hours playing **Magic**. "Friday nights we're pretty much always playing **Magic**, and I'd say that at least one-third of all the weekends we're playing in tournaments. It's hard-core, but it's still fun."

Chris, who just missed advancing to the Round of 64 by finishing 66th at Long Beach, enjoys the variety of combinations and deck constructions **Magic** brings to the table.

"I like the excitement of competing," he said. "I had played enough Sealed Deck and enough booster drafts to know that I wouldn't make any gross blunders in choosing bad cards."

Eleven-year-old Marie, who finished 82nd at Long Beach, just likes representing her gender. "It's fun being one of the only females at the tournament." ■

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Support Your Local Players

Team sponsorships are starting to emerge on the Pro Tour level ❖ by Jeff J. Lin

At its core, Magic: The Gathering® is a one-on-one contest—a match of wits between two individuals. But with the emergence of the Magic Pro Tour, real money, teams, and sponsorships have started to emerge as a result of friendships, camaraderie, and an effort to help balance out the luck involved in a game where an unlucky shuffle can mean the difference between \$22,000 and \$10,000.

"Magic is one of those sports where you can be one of the top players and not do well consistently," said Mario Robaina, a member of the newly-formed Pacific Coast Legends (PCL), one

of several teams that showed up at the Long Beach Professional Tournament. The PCL group is a predominantly Los Angeles-based team with an impressive roster including Preston Poulter, who finished in the Top 8 at both Pro Tour events, 1995 U.S. Champion Mark Justice (a Utah resident, by the way), and 1995 U.S. runner-up Henry Stern.

The team concept allows players to have a better shot at coming away from each tournament with something. Robaina said PCL members keep most of their prize winnings, but help out those who didn't do well and cannot afford to travel to the next tournament. "We'll save some of the winnings to help defray the costs of travel," he said, "but the winner keeps most of it."

Being on a team has other advantages that extend beyond tournament prize packages. "It's nice to have a big group of people who know the game really well," said Robaina. "[You start] bouncing ideas off each other, and the ideas get better."

"Information is the most valuable resource in this game," said teammate Stern, who mentioned the PCL group is planning to do extensive playtesting of the *Alliances*™ expansion set in preparation for the third Pro Tour event, which will follow a Type II *Ice Age*™/*Alliances* constructed-deck format. "We're not going to play [our tournament decks] at

all outside of my apartment," Stern said.

The camaraderie between teammates is also important. "The thing I like most about it is you don't have to come out here by yourself," said

Thomas Guevin, a member of the seven-man Team SMK, sponsored by SMK Collectibles in Hudson, MA. Guevin said SMK paid for half his airfare to the tournament. Team SMK has had the most success on the Pro Tour so far; Michael Loconto, another Team SMK member, won the New York City tournament, and the team placed two members in the Top 4 at Long Beach (runner-up Guevin and semifinalist Darwin Mess).

With the newness of a professional Magic circuit, team concepts are still in their infancy; most teams are still very loosely defined. Many "teams" are basically partnerships between players to split any prize money won; some are teams by virtue of being sponsored by the same organization; and some are formed purely out of friendship. But as the game matures, the trend seems to point in the direction of teams that practice and train together, formed around sponsoring organizations that defray the costs of travel and training (comparable to auto racing). PCL's Robaina said their next step is to secure a sponsor. Others have already jumped on the idea.

Gabriel Alonso, 24, has already
[continued on page 8]

Four members of the Pacific Coast Legends (PCL) team took time out for a quick photo shoot in front of the Queen Mary: from left, Frank Gilson, Mario Robaina, Mark Chalice, and Henry Stern.





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Despite not placing high at Long Beach, nineteen-year-old Magic player Clementine Bagieu of France held up her end of the bargain for her generous sponsor, French magazine Lotus Noir.

started assembling what he hopes to be the premier Magic team in the game. A tournament-level Magic player who lives in Mt. Laurel, NJ, Alonso's been talking with many of Magic's biggest names, trying to recruit them onto the team. In addition, he's already negotiating with several companies within the gaming industry for sponsorship. Though he didn't give specifics, Alonso said he's seeking a yearly sponsorship of between \$10,000 and \$15,000, which would go toward paying travel and other expenses associated with sending a team to tournaments. Members of the team would have yearly contracts, and would get to keep 65-to-75% of their individual winnings, with the remainder being split among the rest of the team.

Alonso said he hopes to have the team and sponsors in place in time for the third Pro Tour event, which takes place in Columbus, OH, in early July.

Nothing as organized as a bona fide professional Magic team was at the Long Beach tournament, however. Sponsorships, while present, varied wildly from individual to individual.

Support Your Local Players [continued from page 6]

Robert Watkins of San Francisco played the first day of the tournament wearing a Manafest T-shirt and Manafest stickers, and played on Spellground play mats—all part of his \$50 deal with Khalsa-Brain games (which makes Spellgrounds and runs Manafest). Watkins also received \$50 worth of merchandise from Rembrandt (makers of Ultra PRO card sleeves) to wear an Ultra PRO T-shirt and use their products at the tournament.

Clementine Bagieu, who finished 52nd at the New York Professional Tournament, had her airfare from France paid for by Lotus Noir, a French gaming magazine that covers Magic. Her end of the agreement was to wear Lotus Noir T-shirts throughout the three-day competition and to write an article describing the event.

Not all sponsors are game-related businesses, however. Dennis Bentley, 27, of Rochester, NY, got a \$200 sponsorship from Sports Look, a store where he works that sells primarily Buffalo Bills sports apparel. "I needed some extra money [to go to the first Pro Tour event] and [the owner] offered to sponsor me for a quarter of whatever I won," said Bentley, who placed in the Top 16 at the New York tournament. His showing was good enough to get sponsored again. Bentley says he's always on the lookout for other sponsors, but has yet to find a taker.

The two most visible teams at the Long Beach competition were the Pacific Coast Legends, and Team SMK. Neutral Ground, a gaming store in Manhattan, also had a large presence by virtue of directly or indirectly sponsoring

over ten participants in the tournament. Neutral Ground T-shirts were in abundance, but no formal Neutral Ground team. All that is going to change, however.

Glen Friedman, one of the co-founders of Neutral Ground, claims putting together a top-notch Magic team is a top priority. "Neutral Ground has decided that it's in our best interest to financially support serious Magic players who want to compete on a national level," he said. "Team Neutral Ground will be alive and ready to take on the world by the time the third professional tournament comes around."

Friedman said he would do "whatever it takes" to put together a winning team—"cards, a place to practice, airfare, travel arrangements, whatever," he said. The players' only obligation? "You wear our shirts," he said. "That's it. We have no interest in your money." Friedman's motivation in sponsoring a

Magic team is not purely goodwill; he sees it as an important part of Neutral Ground's marketing plan.

Of course, regional bragging rights are always

at stake when it comes to team competitions of any form, and Magic is no exception. On the final night of the Long Beach tournament, an informal team challenge took place between a mid-Atlantic team, the Pacific Coast Legends, Team South Florida, and five players from Neutral Ground. PCL defeated Neutral Ground and went on to win the challenge, taking home the \$1,000 prize. "We didn't win," Friedman said, "but we don't plan on making that a habit." ■





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The U.S. Nationals— Who's Who This Year?

Fierce matches should highlight the strategic competition

by Corey A. Smith

The U.S. National Championships will once again be a hotbed of stiff competition. The best of the best from across the country will compete for a shot at glory and the right to represent the United States at the upcoming **Magic: The Gathering®** World Championships in Seattle, WA, August 15–18.

Players to watch, clockwise from top, are: Mark Chalice, Mark Justice, and Henry Stern.



Other top talents to keep an eye on will be Michael Loconto, Shawn Regnier, and Preston Poulter.



One of the frequently-asked questions about this year's Championships is: "Who are the key players to watch?" In the estimation of insiders at Wizards of the Coast, the following players are worth following: First, last year's U.S. Team, which consists of Mark Justice, Henry Stern, Peter Leiher, and Mike Long. Representing the highest-placing team

(overall match records) from last year's World Championships, Justice, Stern, Leiher, and Long have proven time and again their mastery of the game. These masters of **Magic** will strive

to retain their positions on the U.S. squad.

Sure to challenge the defending champions will be: Michael "Loco" Loconto of Massachusetts, who won the first **Magic** professional tournament in NYC last February and placed 22nd at the second Pro Tour event in Long Beach; Long Beach Open division Champion Shawn "Hammer" Regnier of New Hampshire; Preston Poulter of Irvine, CA, a semifinalist at the NYC professional tournament and a quarterfinalist at Long Beach; and finally, Mark Chalice of southern California, who's the DCI's No. 1-ranked Type II player.

The rules for this year's National Championships will be a straight DCI Type II sanctioned tournament. This will include all cards from *Fourth Edition™*, *Chronicles™*, *Ice Age™*, *Fallen Empires™*, *Homelands™*, and *Alliances™*, and will function under the standard Restricted and Banned Lists. With the old mix of cards for Type II and the addition of *Alliances*, this should prove to be an extremely interesting play environment with some very potent dynamics among the playable cards.

The tournament will be divided into two major components, the first being the U.S. Open. The Open consists of a series of eight Swiss-style pairings tournaments in which players who have not previously qualified will battle against one another. Players must participate in a minimum of three and a maximum of four of these tournaments. Each player's top three scores will then be com-

bined, and the four competitors with the highest marks will then advance to the U.S. National Championships. The U.S. Open begins at 8 A.M. on Thursday at Origins™, with a new tournament beginning every four hours until midnight; this schedule repeats itself on Friday. The quarterfinals for the U.S. Open will begin at 8 A.M. on Saturday, and the top four players should be determined by 11:30 A.M.

Almost immediately thereafter, beginning at noon, the first round of the U.S. National Championships begins, consisting of the top four players from the U.S. Open, the previous members of the U.S. Team, all of the different Regional qualifiers, the top two Americans from each Pro Tour, and the top 25 DCI-ranked players from the United States. Players will continue in a Swiss-style pairings tournament until midnight on Saturday, by which time the top four players will have been determined.

The first round of the semifinals will begin at 2:30 P.M. on Sunday. These matches will be played in a best-of-five-games format. The long-awaited championship match (also utilizing a best-of-five-games format) should be decided by Sunday evening, with an elaborate awards presentation to follow.

The top four players will automatically advance to the World Championships the following month, where they will butt heads with members of national teams representing more than twenty different countries. ■

World Championships— Welcome to the Jungle!

Magic's most competitive international event of the year

by Heather Henricks

As the premier event of the \$1,000,000 **Magic: The Gathering Pro Tour™**, the 1996 World Championships is a culmination of the year's greatest and most competitive **Magic** players. International champions from over twenty nations will meet face to face to compete for the coveted World Championship title in Seattle, August 15–18.

The individual 1996 World Champion will receive \$24,000 of the \$200,000 cash purse and a **Magic** card featuring unique artwork designed solely for the 1996 World Champion, making it the world's rarest **Magic** card!

The 1996 World Championships will consist of five days of play, combining individual and team competitions in a variety of new and familiar tournament formats. As the 1996 World Champion must be able to master several formats, proving skill in both limited and constructed environments, individual competitors will test their skill in events that include Type II, Booster Draft, and Type 1.5 formats.

The Type 1.5 format is a modification of the Type I format that includes all the cards from Type I with the exception that the cards normally restricted in Type I and Type II are banned in Type 1.5.

The top eight cumulative scores in these events will face off in a Type II format on the last day to determine the 1996 **Magic: The Gathering** World Champion.

To be invited to the 1996 World Championships, players may qualify in the following ways:

- ♦ Top four finishers from each National Championships held by DCI rules. These players will also be eligible to participate in the team event on their country's behalf.

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Greece	UK/Ireland
Israel	United States
Italy	

- ♦ Top four finishers from each professional tournament prior to the World Championships. Top finishers in professional tournaments in the 1996 calendar year after the World Championships will qualify for the 1997 World Championships.

- ♦ The 1995 World Champion, Alexander Blumke (Switzerland).

- ♦ Top ten DCI-rated players who are not already invited based on the above criteria. The DCI rank will be the composite rank of Sealed Deck (limited) and Type II (constructed).

A World Championship team will also be crowned at the international event. Team scores will be partially based on a composite of members' scores from the individual events, plus a special team event on the fourth day. In addition to the individual events,



tion to the individual events, factoring into the team scores will be a team tournament exclusive to the national teams. This tournament requires each team to construct 4 (four) playable decks in a sealed environment, then compete with these constructed decks against other national teams. The top three teams who place will split \$39,000.

In addition to the 1996 **Magic: The Gathering** World Championships, Wizards of the Coast, Inc. has scheduled a variety of spectacular events that include side tournaments, artists signings, WotC gunslinging, entertainment, charity events, and auctions.

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Reigning World Champion Alexander Blumke hopes to defend his title in Seattle in August.

Magic Pro Tour Sets Sail Aboard the Queen Mary

by Terry Melia

A far cry from the blinding snowstorm **Magic: The Gathering®** players encountered at the first Pro Tour event in New York City in February, sunny, 80-degree southern California weather greeted all those who qualified to compete in the second Wizards of the Coast (WotC) Professional Magic Tournament.

before the Open quarterfinals started on Sunday. Ninety minutes later, Poulter's luck ran out as he was swept (3-0) by eventual Open division champion Shawn "Hammer" Regnier. At the Type II modified NYC competition, which boasted a field of 239 Open players, both Poulter (semifinalist) and Regnier (quarterfinalist) placed high in the standings. The remaining six highest finishers at

New York failed to make the Round of 8 at Long Beach. There was one major difference with this tournament's format, however: a booster draft. Some players liked the change, others dreaded it.

"It's quite difficult to prepare for this kind of tournament," said Alexander Blumke of Switzerland, **Magic's** reigning World Champion. "You need to do some training, but you must know which cards are best to take. The mind game that goes with which colors your neighbors will take is also important. I prefer modified Type II play, but

I think it's good to change the formats from tournament to tournament."

Michael "Loco" Loconto, winner of the NYC Professional Tournament, finished 22nd overall. "I wasn't looking forward to a booster draft at all. I played quite a bit of

Sealed Deck and booster draft before I came here, but the cards I decided I wanted to work with just didn't come to me today. You're just too limited by what you're given in the packs."



Magic players young and old battled for bragging rights and cash prizes at Long Beach. MacKenzie Paterson Jr., the tourney's elder statesman at 54, finished 12th overall in the Open division.

The second stop on WotC's Pro Tour circuit was held May 3 through 5 aboard the permanently-docked Queen Mary ocean-liner in Long Beach. A total of 281 participants—179 Open division players and 102 Juniors—locked horns and battled throughout three levels of the majestic ship in what turned out to be a topsy-turvy tournament in more ways than one. With \$130,000 in prize money on the line (including \$30,000 in scholarships being awarded to the top Juniors), players of all ages battled through difficult qualifying tournaments in their respective regions just to compete in the highly competitive **Magic** tussle.

"If luck is fair, there's no reason why I shouldn't win this thing," said Preston Poulter, moments





The oldest competitor in Long Beach was MacKenzie Patterson Jr., a 54-year-old architect from Carmel, CA. The youngest player was ten-year-old Jean-Paul DiFranco of Los Angeles. Patterson

made it to the Round of 16 in the Open division, earning \$2,000, while DiFranco finished 73rd in the Junior competition.

In Long Beach, the format consisted of two *Fourth Edition™* booster packs and one *Homelands™* booster pack to provide thirty-eight cards for each player. Players sat in groups of eight, and each player opened up a pack, selected one card, and then passed the booster to the next player. Players continued to pick and pass the boosters until all cards were drafted. Players then added whatever land cards they wanted in order to play a forty-card deck. The play/draw rule, as well as the Swiss-style pairings format used during the early rounds in New York City, followed suit in Long Beach.

What's of special note is that there were signs of consistency in player performances from the first pro tournament. For instance, of the Top 16 place-finishers from New York, nine placed inside the Top 32 aboard the Queen Mary.

It is interesting to also note that of the European players competing, most had a tougher time adapting to the booster-draft environment. For instance, of the Top 8 place-finishers at Long Beach, all were stateside residents: Regnier, NH; Tom Guevin, NH; Darwin Mess, MA; Mark Venhaus, CA; Scott Johns, CA; Poulter, CA; Vaughn Sandor, NJ; and Jeff Wood, CA. Bertrand Lestrée of France, the NYC runner-up, and Leon Lindbäck of Sweden, a semifinalist in New York, never even made it to the second day of competition.

"The European players normally don't play non-constructed [or limited] formats like the booster draft," explained color commentator Mark Rosewater, a game designer at WotC, "so it didn't really surprise me that they didn't do well here."

Regnier, who owns and runs a comic-book shop, walked away with top honors and a whopping \$17,000. "I love draft style. It keeps your mind thinking," he said. (See page 17 for details of

Hammer's overall winning tournament.)

Guevin, meanwhile, dropped a 3-2 heart-breaker to Regnier in the championship match and had to settle for \$10,000. "I would say meeting and talking to the people who designed *Magic* was probably the best aspect of this whole tournament," he said. "It's been a rewarding experience. I'm definitely walking away from here happy." (See page 16 for details of Guevin's exciting tournament.)

In the Junior competition, 17-year-old Max Szlagor of Schaumburg, IL, emerged the winner. He defeated 18-year-old Paul McCabe of Toronto 3-0 in their championship meeting. For his efforts, Szlagor walked away with \$8,400 in scholarship winnings, while McCabe earned a \$5,000 scholarship. (See page 22 for personal profiles of both of these young talents.)

What's the next stop on the Pro Tour schedule? Columbus, Ohio, from July 4 to July 7, at the Origins Convention. Besides a different venue, the third professional tournament will sport a new set of rules (*Ice Age™/Alliances™* constructed



deck) and \$155,000 in total prize money. The Open division champion at the third professional tournament will take home \$22,000, while the top Junior will earn another \$8,400 scholarship. The second-place finishers in both divisions will earn \$10,000 and \$5,000 (scholarship), respectively. This star-studded event will coincide with the U.S. National Championships—also being held at Origins—so this Fourth of July weekend lineup will surely ignite its share of fuses. You won't want to miss the fireworks! ■

The 1,019-foot Queen Mary, built in 1936 and permanently docked in Long Beach since 1971, provided the perfect game-playing environment for *Magic's* top players from across the globe.

For five exhausting hours on Sunday evening, Shawn "Hammer" Regnier, left, and Tom Guevin battled one another in the Open division finals. Regnier pulled out a 3-2 win.

Luck of the Draw

Anatomy of the Long Beach Booster Draft's Final Day

❖ by Mark Justice

One of the greatest things about the Sealed-Deck environment is the use of cards that are normally never seen in constructed-deck play. Brothers of Fire is never seen in Type I or II, but is considered an excellent Sealed-Deck card. Experienced players quickly pick this up, but many of the subtleties of booster draft take far more time to grasp. Shawn "Hammer" Regnier demonstrated on the final day of the booster draft that he not only understood these subtleties, but mastered them.

Let's take a look at the tournament's final day, when the Top 8 competitors in both the Junior and Open divisions squared off. Because of the fast-paced nature of the draft, I was able to analyze only one player's draft completely, and I chose Tom Guevin.

Guevin opened the first booster pack and found a Shivan Dragon staring back at him. It was an easy selection. The second pick was not so easy: Prodigal Sorcerer or Darkwood Boars. At this point, Guevin had thirty seconds to look through the pack and decide if he was going to go for stealth or brute strength. He took the Prodigal. In hindsight, Tom made the right choice as no other quality green card passed in front of him for the remainder of the draft.

The third choice was easy; the pack was weak, but contained the underrated Immolation. The fourth pick was difficult as the two key cards were Carrion Ants and Lightning Bolt. Guevin stuck with the Lightning Bolt. Another Prodigal Sorcerer was passed for the fifth pick with the only other possible alternative being a Power Sink, which made it all the way around to Shawn "Hammer" Regnier. The sixth pick was also difficult with three possible cards: Red Elemental Blast, Karma, and Gaseous Form. Tom picked the Red Elemental Blast, which was the first time my choice (Gaseous Form) would have differed from his.

The seventh round of picks staged

the choice between a Cyclopean Mummy and a Circle of Protection: White (CoP). Guevin picked the Mummy; I differed with him there as well. The eighth round gave him Cave People with the only other possible choice being a Zepher Falcon. In the ninth round, Tom had the choice between Benalish Hero and Mons Goblin Raiders. He didn't have a single white card in his deck at this point, but Benalish Hero was the best card in the pack; on a defensive day, he drafted it.

Hindsight is a wonderful thing; now I can sit back and tell you exactly what should have happened and why. How often is your choice in the tenth round of a draft the most important pick of the draft? How often does picking the Ironclaw Orcs cost someone \$7,000? Probably just once, but it happened here.

The choice between Ironclaw Orcs and a Mana Short was the decision that took Tom the longest time. He had Mana Short in his hand and wanted to take it, but decided against it. There were countless times in the finals that had Tom been able to tap Hammer out, he would have won the game. Tom made the same pick I would have made, the quick creature base instead of the card that does nothing the vast majority of the game. But, that's **Magic**.

The eleventh round gave Guevin a Sisters of the Flame. In Round 12, Tom, an obvious Van Halen fan, decided on Jump. Round 13 gave him a Mesa Falcon, 14 an Elder Land Wurm, and 15 a CoP: White.

The second booster did not start out as strong as the first pack, but Tom did have some interesting choices: Clay Statue, Water Elemental, and Terror. At this point, Tom had a strong base of red with only a little blue and white. Tom went for the big bruiser: Water Elemental. Since the tournament was held in Los Angeles, Tom's next pick seemed appropriate: Angry Mob. The third pick came down between a Blue Elemental Blast and a Hill Giant. Hill Giants are

solid creatures in the booster draft and Tom snatched two—one in Round 3 and another in Round 4. He had a chance to get one more in Round 5, but chose a Mishra's Factory instead.

In Round 6, Tom was handed a gift—Armageddon. This card helped him dominate his quarterfinal match against Scott Johns. Round 7 posed a choice between CoP: Green and a Samite Healer. Tom was consistent in his thinking and chose the Samite Healer. Round 8 treated Tom very well as he was passed his second Immolation.

Round 9 might have been Tom's only mistake in the draft. The choice was between Backfire and Healing Salve. Backfire is a below-average card that can only help you if you're in the lead, while Healing Salve is versatile and can protect both you and your creatures; Tom chose Backfire. In Round 10, Tom selected a Goblin Rock Sled, and in Round 11, a Blue Elemental Blast.

Tom's next four picks had no great drama attached to them: Eye for an Eye, the ever powerful Apprentice Wizard, Holy Strength, and Morale. Tom was looking very strong, and his *Homelands*™ pack added to that strength. He opened up with a Chandler. A Giant Albatross came floating by for Round 2, and Tom received another gift in Round 3: Anaba Shaman. Tom chose an An-Zerrin Ruins in Round 4, and a Dwarven Sea Clan in Round 5. He rounded out his draft with an Abbey Matron, Samite Alchemist, and Aysen's Abbey.

So why did Tom get passed such great red cards in the *Homelands* pack? Was he lucky? It actually has more to do with supply lines. Tom cut off the red supply lines. He became the black hole for all red cards in the *Fourth Edition*™ packs. In only one instance, when he picked the Mishra's Factory over the Hill Giant, did Tom take a card over a quality red card. By the time the



Homelands pack came around, the players sitting next to him had no red in their decks. Any player who can completely cut off the supply line for a color has an excellent chance.

So the decks were set. Tom was ready to duel Scott Johns. Scott had an excellent deck containing cards like Mind Twist, Pyrotechnics, Brothers of Fire, and a heavy green creature base. Without mana, however, these spells are rendered virtually useless. Each time Johns would get set up, Tom would cast his Armageddon, leaving Johns paralyzed. Guevin won the match 3-0.

Next we come to Shawn "Hammer" Regnier. Hammer was playing Preston Poulter, the only other player besides himself from the Top 8 in New York. Preston had a black-blue-red deck which did not benefit from sitting next to Guevin. Hammer's deck could be classified as the permission deck of the quarterfinals as it contained Control Magic, Swords to Plowshares, three Circle of Protections, Disenchant, Counterspell, Power Sink, Blue Elemental Blast, Spell Blast, Flood, Giant Oyster, and finally four (yes, four!) Gaseous Forms. What was Hammer's game plan? To run his opponents out of cards.

In order to do this, he started out with forty-two cards in his deck and then increased to as high as forty-six in subsequent games. Game 1 between Hammer and Poulter was very close as Hammer was down to 1 life before Poulter ran out of cards. Besides the main anti-creature defense, Hammer had a CoP: Black out against Poulter which almost entirely shut down Preston's offense. Having no way to deal with the CoP, Poulter chose an interesting strategy—he went up to the mid-forty range but took out all his black cards. This left Poulter's deck incredibly weak as Hammer actually killed Poulter twice by life and swept the match 3-0.

Hammer had a more difficult time with Darwin Mess in the semifinals, a player who drafted a versatile deck. Hammer won the first game by the "Millstone" effect, but each subsequent game became more aggressive, just as in the match with Poulter. Hammer won the match, 3-1.

This brings us to the finals: No. 2 seeded Hammer vs. top-seeded Guevin.

Heading into the match, it was clear Guevin had more power cards, but Hammer had ample defense. This match was not for the faint of heart. Game 3 alone lasted nearly two hours.

In Game 1, the defensive Hammer was at a mismatch with his CoP: Green and CoP: Black standard. Guevin simply overran Hammer with his brutalizing attack. In my opinion, Guevin made a mistake here, the same mistake that Hammer's precious two opponents made; they felt secure in the fact that Hammer couldn't attack. They figured the only way Hammer could win was to run his opponent out of cards, so Guevin took out his An-zerrin Ruins.

Game 2 was going along in typical fashion: Tom would lay a creature and Hammer would find some way to deal with it. Then came a defining moment in the entire series: whether to cast the Shivan Dragon. Tom cast the Shivan Dragon only to have Hammer cast Power Sink. The next turn Hammer cast an Animate Dead on the Shivan. After this, the game went very quickly as Hammer steamrolled with the Shivan.

Game 3 was a marathon. For the first thirty-five cards, it was as exciting as two all-land decks playing each other. The final few turns, however, grew incredibly intense.

It was late in the game and Tom had his Shivan Dragon in hand but had not yet drawn the Armageddon. Hammer had held off with his Flood, Gaseous Forms, and CoP: Blue. Hammer had three cards in his hand and Tom had not seen Hammer's Control Magic, Swords to Plowshares, or any of his three counterspells. For these reasons, Tom did not play his Shivan Dragon. If Tom had played the Shivan Dragon, he would have won Game 3 since Hammer had nothing in his hand. Yet, even without the Shivan Dragon, Tom still had an excellent chance to win. For the first time in the match, Tom drew his Armageddon. Hammer had just drawn his Power Sink two turns earlier, and as Tom cast the Armageddon, Hammer used his Power Sink to destroy it. This left Hammer's mana pool almost empty, so he was not able to use his Flood or CoP: Blue. Tom knocked Hammer down to just 2 life and had the tools necessary to finish him off. Hammer,

however—in typical Pro Tour fashion—drew a Swords to Plowshares and eventually ran Guevin out of cards.

After an intense ending, Guevin still had a great chance to win. An aggressive deck does not need much luck to win games. Guevin proved this in Game 4 when he basically ran over Hammer, tying up the series at 2-2.

Game 5 was my favorite. Both players started out with good draws: Tom had a good blend of creatures and Hammer had three Gaseous Forms. Tom started to take control of the game as he got both a Prodigal Sorcerer and an Anaba Shaman, which are unaffected by the Gaseous Forms. He also had a Lightning Bolt, Immolation, and Red Elemental Blast in his hand. Unfortunately for Tom, he also drew his Shivan Dragon. Even though he held out casting the Shivan in Game 3, you knew he was going to cast it in Game 5 when he drew enough red mana. He thought that if Hammer had the Control Magic then he had the Red Elemental Blast, and if Tom cast Animate Dead on it after counterspelling it, then he would destroy it with his Immolation and Lightning Bolt. What if Hammer had a counter? Then Tom still had the Red Elemental Blast. So Tom cast the Shivan.

Hammer followed by casting a Spell Blast and then an Animate Dead on the Shivan. Tom responded by casting an Immolation, then Lightning Bolt. It wasn't a counter Hammer cast, however, but the Healing Salve that Tom passed up in the ninth round of the second *Fourth Edition* pack. Tom had one last chance as he drew his Dwarven Sea Clan and cast the Red Elemental Blast on the Flood to hold off the Immolated Shivan. Hammer drew his Control Magic, took the Sea Clan, and became the second professional tournament winner.

In the end, Tom Guevin established himself as one of the top Magic players in the country with his performance in Long Beach. Hammer Regnier proved he is truly legit—no one could touch him. ■

Mark Justice is the reigning U.S. National Magic Champion. He finished 24th overall at the Long Beach professional tournament and served as a color commentator during the finals.

'I Could've Easily Won'

Tom Guevin Drops a 3-2 Heartbreaker

I figured I was going to get into a color scheme that would really benefit me. From the start, I was planning on playing three colors 'cause I figured I'd get more powerful cards as opposed to limiting myself to two colors. My basic strategy was to not play defensively. I wasn't going to draft walls and slow things up. I was going to try to put direct damage on people early and just give myself a chance to win."

Indeed 22-year-old Tom Guevin of Nashua, NH, had a strategy—no doubt about it. Competing in the second-ever **Magic: The Gathering**® professional tournament, which utilized a booster draft, he worked his plan to near perfection. After sweeping both Scott Johns and Mark Venhaus in the quarterfinal and semifinal rounds, respectively, Guevin (pronounced "Gay-vin") seemed quite capable of walking away with the \$17,000 first-place prize. He had one more match to play, however—against Shawn "Hammer" Regnier.

"I know Hammer very well," said

Guevin, minutes before the finals began. "He's a fierce competitor. With him, it's a mind game all the time and you have to be mentally ready. I'm confident my style of play will work against him; it'll just be a question of execution. Hammer always plays tricky; you never know what he's got up his sleeve. One thing's for sure—he's not gonna lose, he's gonna make you beat him."

Guevin is no stranger to **Magic**; he's been playing the game since December of '93. A 1995 graduate of Dartmouth University, where he majored in engineering, Guevin qualified for the Long Beach competition by winning one of the New England regional qualifiers. Nevertheless, he was still a virtual unknown entering the tournament. But by Day 3 of the Long Beach challenge, he was ready to tussle with the likes of Regnier. Competing for Team SMK, his strategy was solid; his *stomach*, it turns out, was not.

After beating Hammer convincingly in Game 1, Guevin began to experience some discomfort during the second duel. He and Regnier battled for what seemed an eternity during Game 2, all the while with Guevin fighting a queasy stomach.

"The thing that got me was that I had all of these people hunched over my back and I just started getting a little nervous in my stomach," said Guevin. "I was so close at the end of that game. I knew I had the Armageddon coming, it was the second card from the bottom. If it had only been the third or fourth card from the bottom...."

Heading into Game 3, Guevin looked reasonably okay. Minutes later, however, the bright lights above and

churning acid below would take their toll. He needed to abruptly excuse himself and make a mad dash toward the nearest men's room.

"My nerves really hit during that third game. I think it might have been dehydration, maybe due to the fact that I hadn't eaten supper. I just felt queasy all over," he said.

After a brief intermission, play resumed and Hammer and Guevin battled tooth and nail. Regnier took the third game, Guevin the fourth. In the end, however, it was Regnier's slow, defensive style of play in Game 5 that outlasted Guevin's "kill 'em quick" technique.

"I don't think Hammer's the smartest player, I don't even think he's the best deck designer," said Guevin, moments after losing. "But when it comes down to man-against-man, he's just a tough guy to beat.

"Our match turned into less of cards versus cards and more into whether I was going to play the Dragon or not. He always seemed to be able to either bluff me into playing it or bluff me into not playing it. I have to give him credit for that. I could've easily won."

Wizards of the Coast game designer Mark Rosewater, who served as color commentator during Sunday's Round of 8, summed up Guevin's outing this way: "He was a much better player than a lot of people gave him credit for. People kept saying he was lucky so he didn't get a whole lot of respect. But let me tell you, you don't do as well as Tom did for three days without having some idea of how to draft and how to play."

For his efforts, Guevin—a software engineer for Cabletron Systems in Nashua—walked away with \$10,000. The money, however, wasn't what kept him going.

"To be honest with you, the money doesn't really mean a whole lot to me right now. It's just the thrill of coming here and being just an ordinary guy from New Hampshire who winds up playing in front of a couple hundred people. I mean, of all the places in the whole world, I'd want to be here, playing against him." —T.M.



Guevin's strategy was solid; his stomach, it turned out, was not.

Tough As Nails

"Hammer" Regnier Takes Top Honors

The gift of gab has never eluded Manchester, NH, native Shawn Regnier. A professional arm wrestler for seven years, Shawn earned his nickname "Hammer" by employing constant banter to unnerve his opponents. As an emerging, top-level talent on the Pro Tour, he relies on it heavily when playing **Magic**. Just ask Darwin Mess, who dropped a 3-1 match to Regnier in the Open division semifinals of the Long Beach Professional Tournament.

"Hammer and I know each other very well," said Mess, who hails from Allston, MA. "I've played against him a few times, and I've seen him play lots of times. He has a reputation around New England as being a notorious trash-talker."

Regnier, a 27-year-old newlywed, represents one of the most colorful characters on the **Magic** Pro Tour circuit. He's enthusiastic and passionate about the game, but he clearly breaks the mold of what many believe to be the typical **Magic** player. By virtue of his \$17,000 first-place earnings at Long Beach, he's also one of the richest.

"Not many people are fond of my style of play, but that's part of my game," he said, moments after defeating Tom Guevin (a fellow New Hampshire resident) in a down-to-the-wire, 3-2, championship match. "If you can throw somebody off their game, you do it. It's all about attitude."

Regnier's been playing **Magic** for two years. In competition, he's usually found wearing blue jeans, a long-sleeve black shirt trumpeting "Hammer's Comics" (the comic book shop he owns and operates), and a trademark black-and-white bandanna. "I only wear black because it looks intimidating," he said. "I'm actually very superstitious when it comes to **Magic**."

Regnier qualified for the booster-draft tournament in Long Beach by

placing as a quarterfinalist at the first **Magic** Pro Tour event in New York. He credits much of his success to a group of **Magic** fanatics, known as the "Hitmen," who hang around his 400-square-foot shop in Manchester.

"For the past seven weeks, I've probably been playing about twelve booster drafts a week with four, five, or six guys at my store," said Regnier. "In any professional sport, you have to practice. Larry Bird [former Boston Celtics star] didn't get so good at shooting free throws because he never practiced. He shot free throws all the time.

"The same is true with **Magic**. The kids who come into my store love this game and put everything they have into it. I love this game and put everything I have into it. I'm just fortunate to have such a bright bunch of kids at the store to keep me sharp."

Interestingly, Hammer almost didn't make it to the second day of competition. During the tournament's opening day, he won a total of eight games and posted three match victories, barely qualifying for the Round of 64 by finishing in 61st place. During the second day, however, he played exceptionally well and found himself seeded No. 2 heading into the quarterfinals.

In the quarters, Regnier met NYC semifinalist Preston Poulter and swept him in three straight games, which led him to the semifinals where he disposed of Darwin Mess. He then squared off against Tom Guevin, a player who carried an undefeated (6-0) duel record into the finals.

"I told Tom before we started, regardless of anything, this was going to be a great series. And after we split the first two games, I think he woke up and realized I had a deck also."

Hammer's deck didn't have many creatures and could have easily been overwhelmed by weenies. Guevin's deck, on the other hand, had plenty of



creatures which he kept bringing out early. "Tom's going to get the fast start, no question. Every game, I knew I'd be coming back from life. But in the later games, his creatures just didn't come out as fast so I knew I could establish a couple of walls, and just sit there."

And sit there he did, badgering Guevin. Hammer eventually won Game 3, but watched the fourth duel slip away.

A total of \$7,000 separated champion from runner-up when the fifth game commenced. Hammer, with six hours of sleep the night before and several cups of coffee throughout the day, was raring to go. Guevin, having vomited during Game 3, appeared haggard. As the match entered its fifth hour, Hammer finally emerged the winner. His constant jabbering seemed to help wear Guevin down.

Following the exhaustive finals, Hammer was asked to relate the best aspect of this tournament. "Being No. 1," he said. "I've dreamed about it and now my dream's come true. I never thought that I'd actually break down to tears, but I was crying before just thinking about it."

What about the \$17,000?

"I'll get a new store. I've been looking to expand my shop anyway, maybe buy a place that's 1,200 square feet. The kids who come in really don't have that much room to play at my shop. Now they'll have room."

True to his word, Hammer puts everything he has into the game. —T.M.

Richer by the Round

Not every player can emerge as champion

Second Time's the Charm

Originally, Darwin Mess of Allston, MA, wasn't sure he was going to attend the Long Beach Professional Tournament because he had turned in such a discouraging



DARWIN MESS
Semifinalist

showing at the first Magic professional tournament in New York in February. Unsure, that is, until he discovered that Long Beach was using a booster draft format, tried it, and loved it.

"I found out that I was good at it," he said. "I said, 'I don't care what it takes, I'm gonna qualify for Long Beach.'"

He did much more than qualify. Mess, a member of Team SMK of Hudson, MA (which also counted runner-up Tom Guevin

among its members), made a strong showing the second day of play to end up as the No. 3 seed going into the final round of eight.

"I was playing six days a week preparing for this, and I was doing as many as three or four booster drafts a week," he said.

Mess drafted a black-red deck the final day with a few creatures and direct damage. He was able to beat Vaughn Sandor, 3-2, in the quarterfinals, but then ran into fellow New Englander Shawn "Hammer" Regnier in the semifinals, where he lost, 3-1. "I may have seemed rattled [during the match against Regnier] because every time I've ever played him, there's always been fierce banter," he said.

Mess, who mentioned he is officially going to change his last name to Kastle, is a 24-year-old marketing administrator for International Display and Exhibit Corporation, a small company based in Newton Upper Falls, MA.



MARK VENHAUS
Semifinalist

Can't Beat the Heat

Mark Venhaus wasn't used to the scrutiny that making the semifinals at the Long Beach Professional Tournament would put him under. The 26-year-old computer technician from Hawthorne, CA, said he was unnerved by the video cameras transmitting the action to the spectator viewing area during his semifinal match against eventual runner-up Tom Guevin.

"The first two times the cameras were focused on me, I was really uncomfortable with it," Venhaus said. "The first time the camera was on me I made total mistakes; I was vegging on the camera."

Venhaus drafted a green-red deck based mostly around small- to mid-sized green creatures, with very little creature removal abilities. "I had a horrible draft," he said. "There was nothing in the black and white that came by me. What I saw in red wasn't that great either, but it was a lot better than what I had in black or white."

The deck was good enough to get him by Jeff Wood in the quarterfinals, but it was no match for Guevin, who swept him in the semifinals, 3-0. "He straight up wiped me," Venhaus said.

Despite the loss, Venhaus exceeded his expectations for the tournament. "I got real good cards yesterday and pulled off the first round here. It came off a lot better than I thought. I'm happy." And \$5,900 richer.

Almost Didn't Make It

Scott Johns knows luck runs in cycles. He studies classical trombone and conducting at Cal-State Northridge and was the No. 2-ranked player in the Duelists' Convocation International™ going into the Long Beach Professional Tournament. But even after decent showings during the first two days of competition, Johns almost didn't make it to the final day. A bookkeeping error placed a player with less wins into the Top 8, bumping Johns to ninth in the rankings—only eight advanced to the finals. It wasn't until another player caught the mistake and brought it to the judges' attention during the final audit that Johns



SCOTT JOHNS
Quarterfinalist

was able to squeak in, on tie-breakers, into the No. 8 slot.

The 23-year-old Northridge, CA, resident's elation was short-lived, however, as he had mana problems and was swept in the quarterfinals, 3-0, by eventual runner-up Tom Guevin.

Johns drafted a green-red deck which was almost completely creature-based, with very little direct damage capability. He also added a smidge of black for Broken Visage and Mind Twist, which he drew in two games against Guevin, but never got enough mana to use, much to his chagrin.

"I knew a lot of people were upset after losing to Guevin

and the Mind Twist [on Day 2]," Johns said. "It would have been nice to get to play it against him once, even if it meant losing."

Ironically, the card that Guevin used to beat Johns was a card Johns passed up in the draft: Armageddon. "Ultimately that's the card that beat me," he said. "I think I got a Durkwood Boars or Ironroot Treefolk or something like that [instead]."

But Johns had no regrets. "I thought I had a solid deck," he said. "Looking back, I would have [drafted] all the same."

Still Going Strong

Being one of only two people to make it to the final Round of 8 in both **Magic** professional tournaments thus far served as little consolation for Preston Poulter. "I wanted to do better," said the 22-year-old UC Irvine graduate student, who made it to the semifinals at the New York City tournament two months prior. Poulter was the only member of the seven-man Pacific Coast Legends (PCL) team to make it to the final eight.



PRESTON POULTER
Quarterfinalist

Poulter was knocked out in the quarterfinals by eventual champion Shawn Regnier, 3-0. Regnier was the other Top 8 finisher from the first professional tournament to make it to the top eight in Long Beach.

Though Poulter was able to squeak into the Top 8 on tiebreakers, the cards were not in his favor on the final day. "You always want to go for creature removal," he said, "and in [the first pack] the best card was Immolation. In the next pack, the best card I got was a Prodigal Sorcerer."

Poulter was noticeably unhappy about the draft. "I was not able to draft a deck that I felt was adequate simply because I didn't have access to any of the cards." He ended up playing a black-blue-red deck with a mixture of creatures, anti-creature cards, and a few creature boosters.

Poulter got Regnier down to 2 life in the opening game, but then conceded the game. "I knew that he [Regnier] had a Giant Oyster, a Flood, four Gaseous Forms, and a Control Magic, and that's more cards than you can count on a single hand that can effectively deal with creatures," Poulter said, "which means any kind of creature strategy was effectively hosed, and I really didn't have another strategy."

Fatal Mistake Costs Him

In **Magic**, sometimes one mistake is the difference between winning and losing. Vaughn Sandor, a 28-year-old retail manager from Woodbridge, NJ, was reminded of this the hard way



VAUGHN SANDOR
Quarterfinalist

in his quarterfinal match against Darwin Mess.

After splitting the first two games of the best-of-five match, Sandor had Mess on the ropes in Game 3, but made a fatal mistake. "All I had to do was make my darned creature unblockable with Tawnos's Wand and I had him the next turn. But I forgot and he blocked it. The next turn, I made my play, he had 1 life left, and he knocked me out."

Though Sandor came back to win Game 4, Mess took the fifth and deciding game. Sandor drafted a strong blue-black deck with several flying creatures, Ihsan's Shade, Pestilence, Howl from Beyond, Drain Life, and three Dark Rituals, but was running only 35 percent land.

"That came around and bit me [in the final duel]," he said. "I couldn't pull the second Swamp to play the Dark Ritual and Pestilence to knock out all his 2/2 creatures."

Sandor qualified by placing in the Top 64 at the first Pro Tour event in New York City. "This is the first time I've been successful [at a tournament]," Sandor said. "In New York I was intimidated, but that [first tournament] got that out of me. I think I've got a lot more confidence now."

A Gambler at Heart

Jeff Wood, an engineering manager at Apple Computer, from Mountain View, CA, hadn't really expected to play in a **Magic** professional tournament. It wasn't until a friend of his won a Pro Tour qualifier in nearby Menlo Park that he began to think about it. "It was like, 'Hmmm. If he can do it, we can do it. Let's take it seriously.'"

Wood, 30, ended up winning a Sacramento qualifier and came to Long Beach with a relatively modest goal.

"My goal was to make the Top 64. That would at least pay my way down here, and I'd have a fun weekend, enter the *Alliances*[™] Sealed-Deck tournament, and have a good time," Wood said. "[The second day] I started out strong and I thought, 'Hmmm. I might make the Top 32.... So my goals gradually started raising as I began to do better.'"

Wood surprised himself by sweeping his final match on the second day to finish in the Top 8 and advance to the finals. "At that point, it was like, 'This is unbelievable!' I didn't sleep much last night, thinking about today."

Wood's good fortune ran out in the quarterfinals when he lost to Mark Venhaus, 3-2. Wood drafted a green-black deck with mostly smaller creatures, and was unable to put Venhaus away. "Our decks were pretty comparable," he said. "I knew it was going to take everything I had, but I made a couple of critical mistakes."

Despite the loss, Wood was more than happy with his performance. "To me, **Magic** is a hobby; I like playing it. It's not something I do to make lots of money," he said. "Though now I can say I finally made money [\$3,500] playing **Magic**."

—Jeff J. Lin



JEFF WOOD
Quarterfinalist

Lethal Weapons

On-the-spot booster draft deck construction can mean the difference between winning and losing. Here's how the top place-finishers at Long Beach dealt with the luck of the draw on the final day. ❖ *by Beth Moursund*



Shawn "Hammer" Regnier

(OPEN CHAMPION)

Unlike most players, Hammer passed up the direct damage and big creatures, building a very slow, passive, mostly-blue control deck with a little white and just a touch of black. He played with only seven creatures (two of them walls), and his most powerful non-wall was a Grapeshot Catapult. He passed up a Lightning Bolt for a Swords to Plowshares, and a Karma for a Disenchant. He grabbed all the Gaseous Forms he could, ending up with four. In most of his games, he was able to neutralize his opponent's creatures with Gaseous Forms and/or Flood, then slowly eat them with a Giant Oyster until he was finally able to steal a big creature—or, in some cases, simply hold them off until his opponent ran out of cards.

Thomas Guevin

(OPEN RUNNER-UP)

Guevin opened his first booster pack to find a Shivan Dragon staring him in the face. It didn't take much thought to decide to play heavy red. Noticing that the players to his left didn't seem to be drafting much red, he decided to pick up a second color early and then get more red creatures later,

so he grabbed a couple of Prodigal Sorcerers. When the draft switched directions on the second booster, he was passed a number of good white cards, and changed his initial red-blue plans to red with a splash of both white and blue. His favorite card from the second pack actually came to him on the sixth pick: Armageddon. He also tried to pick up banders whenever possible, feeling that they can break the creature standoffs in which drafts and sealed decks often end up.

Darwin Mess

(OPEN SEMIFINALIST)

Mess was very happy with his draft. He managed to score two direct-damage spells, Fireball and Drain Life, along with Brothers of Fire and a good selection of both small and large creatures, ranging from Drudge Skeletons up through a Fire Elemental and Shapeshifter. He left his walls in the sideboard, to bring in only if he ended up facing a really fast deck. He was even prepared to deal with white sideboard cards: he had a Gloom for the Circles of Protection, and a Red Mana Battery for Conversion. He was concerned about Karma, but hoped that he could kill his opponent faster than Karma

could kill him. His main worry was big fliers, since his only creature with flying was a Sengir Bat.

Mark Venhaus

(OPEN SEMIFINALIST)

Venhaus built a fast, creature-heavy red-green deck. His best picks, he said, were Lightning Bolt, Giant Growth, and Cockatrice. His main strategy was to get lots of small creatures out fast, to swarm over his opponent and hopefully take him out before getting the chance to play anything big. If the ground battle became bogged down, he hoped that his air force—the Cockatrice, two Willow Fairies, and an Ornithopter, preferably with Regeneration on the Cockatrice and/or Firebreathing on one of the small fliers—would be enough to get past the defenses and win the battle.

Max Szlagor

(JUNIOR CHAMPION)

Szlagor wasn't overjoyed with his draft; he described it as "more or less OK." His drafting strategy was to choose colors he didn't think many people would play (blue and white) and go for those colors. His best pick, though, was an artifact: Aladdin's Ring. Too expensive for use in standard tour-

nament play, it's a killer in limited-environment play; it won a number of games for him. In addition, he drafted two Phantasmal Forces, along with two Zephyr Falcons, a Mesa Falcon, and a Serra Aviary for a very impressive air force. A Flood complemented those nicely, keeping ground creatures under control. Serrated Arrows and Aysen Bureaucrats could take care of small fliers while Gaseous Form neutralized any creature that avoided the other defenses. Kismet, Castle, and Righteousness, along with a couple of CoP's, topped things off for a very nice deck.

Paul McCabe

(JUNIOR RUNNER-UP)

McCabe tried to complement banding and first strike with Giant Growths and damage prevention, making his creatures extremely hard to get rid of. He also scored superb cards as his first pick from each of the *Fourth Edition*™ packs: Serra Angel in the first, and Millstone in the second. McCabe mentioned wryly that his good cards had an alarming tendency to drift toward the bottom of his deck. In fact, he lost one game by running out of cards because the Millstone was on the bottom of his deck. ■

Best Draft Formulas

TOP FOUR OPEN DIVISION PLACE-FINISHERS

Shawn "Hammer" Regnier

43 CARDS

- 2 Alabaster Potion
- 1 Animate Dead
- 1 Blue Elemental Blast
- 1 Circle of Protection: Black
- 1 Circle of Protection: Green
- 1 Control Magic
- 1 Counterspell
- 1 Dark Maze
- 1 Disenchant
- 1 Feast of the Unicorn
- 1 Flood
- 4 Gaseous Form
- 1 Giant Oyster
- 1 Giant Tortoise
- 1 Grapeshot Catapult
- 1 Power Sink
- 1 Samite Healer
- 1 Spell Blast
- 1 Swords to Plowshares
- 1 Wall of Bone
- 1 Yotian Soldier
- 9 Island
- 5 Plains
- 4 Swamp

SIDEBOARD

13 CARDS

- 1 Amrou Kithkin
- 1 Circle of Protection: Blue
- 1 Feedback
- 1 Fortified Area
- 2 Giant Albatross
- 1 Healing Salve
- 1 Pearled Unicorn
- 1 Piety
- 1 Reef Pirate
- 1 Samite Alchemist
- 1 Soraya the Falconer
- 1 Visions

Tom Guevin

40 CARDS

- 1 Abbey Matron
- 1 An-Zerrin Ruins
- 1 Anaba Shaman
- 1 Angry Mob
- 1 Armageddon
- 1 Aysen Abbey
- 1 Benalish Hero
- 1 Cave People
- 1 Chandler
- 1 Giant Albatross
- 2 Hill Giant
- 2 Immolation
- 1 Ironclaw Orcs
- 1 Lightning Bolt
- 1 Mesa Pegasus
- 1 Mishra's Factory
- 7 Mountain
- 2 Prodigal Sorcerer
- 1 Samite Healer
- 1 Shivan Dragon
- 1 Sisters of the Flame
- 1 Water Elemental
- 4 Island
- 5 Plains

SIDEBOARD

14 CARDS

- 1 Apprentice Wizard
- 1 Backfire
- 1 Blue Elemental Blast
- 1 Circle of Protection: White
- 1 Cyclopean Mummy
- 1 Dwarven Sea Clan
- 1 Elder Land Wurm
- 1 Eye for an Eye
- 1 Goblin Rock Sled
- 1 Holy Strength
- 1 Jump
- 1 Morale
- 1 Red Elemental Blast
- 1 Samite Alchemist

Darwin Mess

40 CARDS

- 2 Anaba Bodyguard
- 1 Bog Wraith
- 1 Brothers of Fire
- 1 Chandler
- 1 Drain Life
- 1 Drudge Skeletons
- 1 Fire Elemental
- 1 Fireball
- 1 Grapeshot Catapult
- 1 Hurlloon Minotaur
- 1 Ironclaw Orcs
- 1 Keldon Warlord
- 1 Murk Dwellers
- 1 Raise Dead
- 1 Red Mana Battery
- 2 Scavenging Ghoul
- 1 Sengir Bats
- 1 Shapeshifter
- 1 Simulacrum
- 1 Weakness
- 9 Mountain
- 9 Swamp

SIDEBOARD

16 CARDS

- 1 Alabaster Potion
- 1 Aliban's Tower
- 1 Apprentice Wizard
- 1 Cemetery Gate
- 1 Circle of Protection: Artifacts
- 1 Death Ward
- 1 Fog
- 1 Gloom
- 1 Iron Star
- 1 Mana Short
- 1 Mons's Goblin Raiders
- 1 Orcish Oriflamme
- 1 Samite Alchemist
- 1 Throne of Bone
- 1 Trade Caravan
- 1 Wall of Stone

Mark Venhaus

33 CARDS

- 1 Cockatrice
- 1 Fire Elemental
- 1 Firebreathing
- 1 Folk of An-Havva
- 1 Giant Growth
- 1 Giant Spider
- 1 Giant Strength
- 1 Grizzly Bears
- 1 Hungry Mist
- 1 Hurr Jackal
- 1 Keldon Warlord
- 1 Lightning Bolt
- 2 Llanowar Elves
- 1 Ornithopter
- 1 Regeneration
- 1 Retribution
- 2 Shanodin Dryads
- 1 Shatter
- 1 Sisters of the Flame
- 1 Spectral Bears
- 1 Stream of Life
- 1 Wall of Ice
- 2 Willow Faerie
- 7 Forest
- 8 Mountain

SIDEBOARD

12 CARDS

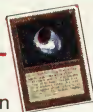
- 1 Aliban's Tower
- 1 Amrou Kithkin
- 1 Benalish Hero
- 1 Circle of Protection: White
- 1 Eternal Warrior
- 1 Holy Armor
- 1 Pearled Unicorn
- 1 Pradesh Gypsies
- 1 Root Spider
- 1 Stream of Life
- 1 Sunken City
- 1 Wall of Wood

TOP TWO JUNIOR DIVISION PLACE-FINISHERS

Max Szlagor

43 CARDS

- 1 Abbey Matron
- 1 Alabaster Potion
- 1 Aladdin's Ring
- 1 Angry Mob
- 1 Aysen Bureaucrats
- 1 Castle
- 1 Circle of Protection: Black
- 1 Circle of Protection: Green
- 1 Flood
- 1 Gaseous Form
- 1 Kismet
- 1 Mesa Falcon
- 2 Pearled Unicorn
- 1 Phantasmal Forces
- 1 Power Sink
- 1 Righteousness
- 1 Samite Healer
- 1 Segovian Leviathan
- 1 Serra Aviary
- 1 Serra Inquisitors
- 1 Serrated Arrows



- 1 White Knight
- 2 Zephyr Falcon
- 7 Island
- 10 Plains

SIDEBOARD

12 CARDS

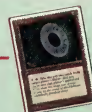
- 1 Blue Elemental Blast
- 1 Brainwash
- 1 Circle of Protection: Blue
- 1 Drain Power
- 1 Erosion
- 1 Holy Armor
- 1 Kismet
- 1 Psychic Venom
- 1 Purelace
- 1 Renewal
- 1 Trade Caravan
- 1 Twiddle



Paul McCabe

40 CARDS

- 1 Alabaster Potion
- 2 Aysen Bureaucrat
- 1 Beast Walkers
- 2 Benalish Hero
- 1 Elven Riders
- 1 Fog
- 2 Giant Growth
- 2 Healing Salve
- 1 Hungry Mist
- 1 Ironroot Treefolk
- 2 Llanowar Elves
- 1 Mesa Pegasus
- 1 Millstone
- 1 Oasis
- 2 Samite Healer
- 1 Serra Angel
- 1 White Knight
- 8 Forest
- 9 Plains



SIDEBOARD

15 CARDS

- 1 Æther Storm
- 1 Carapace
- 1 Circle of Protection: Blue
- 1 Death Grip
- 1 Drudge Skeletons
- 1 Drudge Spell
- 1 Giant Strength
- 1 Gloom
- 1 Green Ward
- 1 Instill Energy
- 1 Kormus Bell
- 1 Pearled Unicorn
- 1 Prodigal Sorcerer
- 1 Samite Alchemist
- 1 Zephyr Falcon



Rising Stars

by Beth Moursund

Max Szlagor

(JUNIOR CHAMPION)

Max Szlagor is a 17-year-old high school senior from Schaumburg, IL, a suburb of Chicago. His background is a bit more exotic, however; he was born in Poland, and his family moved to the United States when he was three. He hopes to attend the University of Illinois, probably transferring there after a year of Junior college.

During his freshman and sophomore years of high school, Max competed on both the cross-country and track teams. He decided not to run during his junior and senior years due to harder classes which took up more of his time. He did find time for Academic Bowl, however. Currently he has few hobbies other than **Magic: The Gathering**®. "I like to hang out with my friends a lot. If we're not playing **Magic** we'll just go out and talk for a while or go to the movies or something. Lately I've been playing **Netrunner**™ a lot, because we started to play that game and liked it; we're probably going to continue it."

Szlagor had only played in a booster draft a couple of times. "It's hard for us



to get eight people together to play booster draft, because a lot of people aren't real serious about it and only four people were actually going to the professional tournament from my area."

Max was first introduced to **Magic** in June of '94. "I was roleplaying at a Barnes and Noble and there was an employee there who had played **Magic** before and had his cards with him. So when we were done with the campaign, he brought out his cards and we started playing." He played for a month or two and then lost interest. Toward the end of the year, however, he found out that some **Magic** tournaments were being held in his area, so he dusted off his cards and started playing again.

He estimates that he's played in more than a hundred tournaments since then—but mostly small, non-sanctioned ones. He finished 37th at the New York City Professional Tournament in Febru-

ary. He's looking forward to competing at the third professional tournament in Columbus, Ohio, in July.

Paul McCabe

(JUNIOR RUNNER-UP)

Paul McCabe is an 18-year-old from Toronto, Ontario, where he attends Earl Haig Secondary School. He hasn't



settled on a college yet; he thinks he'll probably go to the University of Toronto or to Queens College in Kingston—"or on a slight chance, Harvard." He was

sponsored by a store called 401 Convenience in downtown Toronto.

When he's not playing **Magic**, McCabe enjoys playing the guitar and fencing—"that being with swords, not wood and nails," he added, grinning. He's been fencing saber for about three years and says he's OK at it. "It's hard to find time to practice because it's mostly a university-level sport."

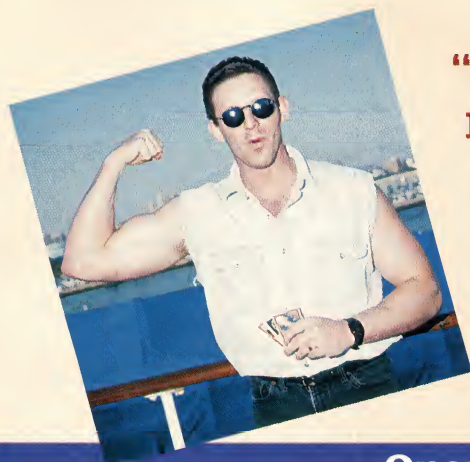
McCabe has been playing **Magic** for two-and-a-half years. He almost literally stumbled over the game. "I was at school one day just walking down the hall and I noticed a couple friends of mine camped out on the floor, playing some sort of strange card game. It was kind of a new thing, I'd never really seen anything like it before, so I stopped and asked them what it was and how it worked. It just really intrigued me, so I bought a [booster] pack that same day."

When McCabe started spending more and more time playing **Magic**, his parents weren't too pleased. "I mean, they thought the game was fine, but it was the time investment they didn't like. They thought I was taking too much time away from school and other interests." He hopes his newfound scholarship winnings (\$5,900) will help change their opinion of the game. ■

Junior Division Place Finishers

Magic: The Gathering Professional Tournament (Long Beach, CA, May 3-5, 1996)

PLACE	NAME	RESIDENCE	AGE				
Champion	Max Szlagor	Schaumburg, IL	17	24th	Jon Finkel	Fanwood, NJ	17
Runner-up	Paul McCabe	Toronto, Ontario, Canada	18	25th	Yan Ebyam	Pomona, CA	18
Semifinalist	Jason Norment	Hackettstown, NJ	17	26th	Tony Lau	Idaho Falls, ID	16
Semifinalist	Brian Wilson	Redmond, WA	17	27th	James West	Mount Vernon, WA	18
Quarterfinalist	Michael Bregoli	Southwick, MA	17	28th	Todd Miller	Santa Barbara, CA	18
Quarterfinalist	Jason dela Cruz	San Jose, CA	15	29th	Taej Mulugeta	Mtn. View, CA	16
Quarterfinalist	Gregory Kleiman	Linden, NJ	16	30th	Charles Kornblith	Pasadena, CA	13
Quarterfinalist	Jason Zila	Huntington Beach, CA	16	31st	Zachary Enos	Santa Barbara, CA	18
Round of 16	S. O'Mahoney-Schwartz	Brooklyn, NY	15	32nd	Billy Regan	Hermosa Beach, CA	17
Round of 16	Jon Saso	Cupertino, CA	17	33rd	Aaron Terry	Plantation, FL	17
Round of 16	Brad Swan	Landenberg, PA	16	34th	Kevin 'Righteous' Reed	Manchester, NH	17
Round of 16	MacKenzie Patterson III	Carmel, CA	17	35th	Lee Thompson	Reno, NV	18
Round of 16	Matt Woods	Rohnert Park, CA	18	36th	Gabriel Aid	Tarzana, CA	15
Round of 16	James Murphy	Arlington, TX	16	37th	Nate Foure	Devon, PA	17
Round of 16	Phillip Hua	San Jose, CA	16	38th	Henry Johnson	San Luis Obispo, CA	17
Round of 16	David Bachmann	Linden, NJ	15	39th	Trevor Blackwell	Modesto, CA	16
17th	Chris Cade	San Jose, CA	18	40th	Feming Chan	Cranbury, NJ	15
18th	Adam Clarke	Lancaster, CA	12	41st	D. O'Mahoney-Schwartz	Brooklyn, NY	16
19th	Jess Means	Columbus, OH	14	42nd	Heath Jennings	Sacramento, CA	18
20th	Brendon Herzog	Portland, OR	18	43rd	Brian Wood	Redondo Beach, CA	18
21st	Aaron Smith	Rosamond, CA	18	44th	Bobby Dietzel	Millipitas, CA	16
22nd	Alexander Zane	Tujunga, CA	16	45th	Noah Weil	St. Paul, MN	16
23rd	Yubin Tao	Mountain View, CA	16	46th	Tris Davenport	Walnut Creek, CA	—
				47th	Paul Hudson	Plantation, FL	16
				48th	Graham Tatomer	Santa Barbara, CA	17



"I am very superstitious when it comes to Magic. I don't like jinxing. I don't like hearing people say, 'Oh, he's got it,' before a game is over. I hate hearing that."

**— Shawn "Hammer" Regnier
Long Beach Open Div. Champion**

Open Division Participants

Magic: The Gathering® Second Professional Tournament (Long Beach, CA, May 3-5, 1996)

Open Division Place-Finishers

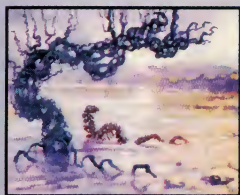
PLACE	NAME	RESIDENCE	AGE
Champion	Shawn "Hammer" Regnier	Manchester, NH	27
Runner-up	Tom Guevin	Nashua, NH	22
Semifinalist	Darwin Mess	Allston, MA	24
Semifinalist	Mark Venhaus	Hawthorne, CA	26
Quarterfinalist	Scott Johns	Northridge, CA	23
Quarterfinalist	Preston Poulter	Irvine, CA	22
Quarterfinalist	Vaughn Sandor	Woodbridge, NJ	28
Quarterfinalist	Jeff Wood	Mountain View, CA	30
9th	Dominic Crapuchettes	Annapolis, MD	26
10th	Matt Place	Kansas City, MO	20
11th	Frederik Foure	Devon, PA	23
12th	MacKenzie Patterson Jr.	Carmel, CA	54
13th	Bryan McKinty	Sudbury, Ontario, Canada	22
14th	George Baxter	Dallas, TX	23
15th	David Humphreys	Somerville, MA	23
16th	Chris Bishop	Charlottesville, VA	28
17th	Derek Rank	Centerville, VA	24
18th	Bruce Swiney	Tacoma, WA	20
19th	Chris Berryman	La Canada, CA	27
20th	Henry Stern	Los Angeles, CA	28
21st	Sean Fleischman	Bronx, NY	26
22nd	Michael Loconto	Grafton, MA	26
23rd	James McGovern	Middle Village, NY	31
24th	Mark Justice	West Valley City, UT	25
25th	Andre Redi	Cilavina (PV), Italy	26
26th	Matt Hyra	Seattle, WA	26
27th	Kevin Grubb	Topeka, KS	32
28th	Mark Hendrickson	Covina, CA	25
29th	Chris McMahon	Freemont, NE	25
30th	Michael Long	Centerville, VA	21
31st	Cory Jones	Capo Beach, CA	25
32nd	Shannon Hill	Lubbock, TX	27
33rd	Frank Gilson	Anaheim, CA	28
34th	Minh Huynh	Mesquite, TX	22
35th	Nate Clarke	Londonderry, NH	15
36th	Joshua Bradford	Tallahassee, FL	22
37th	John Immordino	Carmichael, CA	20
38th	Eric Tam	Toronto, Ontario, Canada	19
39th	Jean-Luc Park	New York, NY	25
40th	Mike Murphy	Kenilworth, NJ	27
41st	Mark Chalice	Claremont, CA	24
42nd	Dan Lofgren	Milpitas, CA	35
43rd	Ken Roth	Glendale Heights, IL	25
44th	Hiroki Katsuya	Shimoigusa, Tokyo, Japan	28
45th	John Chinnock	Summit, NJ	24
46th	Patrick Albro	Rochester, NY	23
47th	Jan Maarten Cobben	Groningen, Netherlands	35
48th	Jeff Pysher	Newark, DE	32
49th	David Dittmer	Acton, MA	21
50th	Thierry Dallacrocce	Calabasas, CA	24
51st	Nick Hsieh	Forest Hills, NY	29
52nd	Scott Gregory Reinfeld	Boynton Beach, FL	19
53rd	Brian Weissman	Goleta, CA	21
54th	Sean Conway	Abington, MA	31
55th	Matt Bordeaux	Fayetteville, AR	22
56th	Jeremiah Tollman	Denver, CO	23
57th	Edward Willis	Boise, ID	37
58th	James Higa	Lancaster, CA	24
59th	Bo Bell	San Dimas, CA	23
60th	Neil Guthrie	Johannesov, Sweden	35
61st	Toshiki Tsukamoto	Toshima-ku, Tokyo, Japan	29
62nd	Robert Muranaka	Layton, UT	26
63rd	Kirk Simmons	Wayzata, MN	24
64th	Dominic Symens	Brussels, Belgium	—

Other Open Division Participants (in alphabetical order)

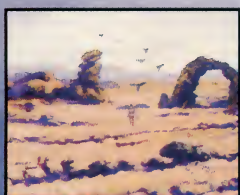
NAME	RESIDENCE	AGE	NAME	RESIDENCE	AGE
David Adkins	Loisville, TN	29	James Lemire	Southboro, MA	26
Frank Adler	Koln, Germany	—	Bertrand Lestrée	Camberly, France	25
Gabriel Alonso	Mount Laurel, NJ	24	Leon Lindbäck	Stockholm, Sweden	20
Biren Amin	Laurel, MD	27	Rich Lipman	Rochester, NY	39
Thomas Andersson	Taby, Sweden	25	Caroline Liu	Los Angeles, CA	20
Marc Aquino	Ithaca, NY	25	Joel Lytle	Boise, ID	28
Clémentine Bagieu	Paris, France	19	Kai Martin	Winfield, IL	22
Zane Barker	Albuquerque, NM	27	Colin Mayfield	Citrus Heights, CA	—
Scott Becker	San Luis Obispo, CA	23	Adam Maysonet	Sunrise, FL	25
Bill Bennett	Brampton, Ontario, Canada	18	Lee McLain	Cuyahoga Falls, OH	27
Dennis Bentley	Churchville, NY	27	Eric Nakayama	San Diego, CA	27
Julia Berggren	San Diego, CA	19	Cary Newburger	New York, NY	37
Ben Bleiweiss	Great Neck, NY	20	Randal Newell	Long Beach, CA	28
Alexander Blumke	Thönex, Switzerland	27	Cuong Nguyen	Cupertino, CA	33
Stephane Bolduc	Verdun, Canada	25	Dennis Nichols	Omaha, NE	24
Brian Bouton	Keswick, VA	57	Paul Pantera	Cupertino, CA	26
Jeff Broido	San Diego, CA	22	Jason Pass	Regina, SK, Canada	—
Shayne Brown	Vista, CA	23	Bob Perez	Redmond, WA	43
Kurt Burgner	Torrance, CA	25	Tom Pettigrew	Anchorage, AK	30
Scott Burke	Corvallis, OR	27	Chris Pikula	Ithaca, NY	21
Elliot Campbell	Lincoln, NE	20	Gabriele Pisciocchio	Rome, Italy	—
David Clement	France	—	David Price	Ithaca, NY	20
Clint Couse	Rolla, MO	25	Donald Price	Las Vegas, NV	25
Shawn Davies	Ottawa, Ontario, Canada	22	Brian Pugnier	San Pedro, CA	21
Richard Davis	Orem, UT	33	Michael Pustilnik	Silver Spring, MD	30
Zak Dolan	San Mateo, CA	26	Brett Quorn	Woodland, WA	18
Jeff Dollarhide	Los Angeles, CA	25	Patrick Rateliff	Winona, MN	24
Robert Dougherty	Cambridge, MA	26	Mario Robaina	Manhattan Beach, CA	24
Michael Dove	Los Angeles, CA	24	James Robinson	Walnut, CA	31
Rudy Edwards	Fayetteville, NC	21	Michael Rose	Lincoln, NE	20
Matthew Elias	Lansdale, PA	16	Mike Ruff	Scottsville, NY	32
Doug Evans	Lincoln, NE	51	Ricard Garcia Saldana	Barcelona, Spain	21
Brian Fernandez	Campbell, CA	32	Arjan Salomons	Leiden, Netherlands	—
Ron Fraigon	Tujunga, CA	31	Bryan Sammon	Carrollton, TX	16
Javier Garavito	Kent, WA	24	Oliver Schneider Haringey	London, United Kingdom	—
Chuck Gegax	Rohnert Park, CA	28	Justin Schroeder	Ft. Collins, CO	21
Jeremy Genrich	Omaha, NE	19	Blaise Selby	Iowa City, IA	—
Matthew Gomez	Albuquerque, NM	20	Matt Simmons	Cerritos, CA	21
Lucas Gonzalez	Miami, FL	27	Lauri Sipi	Helsinki, Finland	—
David Goodnuff	Cranbury, NJ	23	Jim, Skinner	Seattle, WA	28
Adam Green	Nashua, NH	21	Paul Sligh	Atlanta, GA	33
Michael Gurney	Winnipeg, MB, Canada	—	Brian Smith	Sunnyvale, CA	29
Michael Gutierrez	El Paso, TX	27	Michael Sochon	Brie-Conte-Robert, France	19
Brian Hacker	San Diego, CA	21	Eric Strome	Simi Valley, CA	38
Robert Hahn	New York, NY	24	Ryan Stubblefield	San Luis Obispo, CA	19
Lee Hansen	Birmingham, AL	28	Chris Suver	Seattle, WA	40
Sam Heckman	Elgin, IL	19	Matthew Thornton	Chicago, IL	17
Bill Hodack	Syracuse, NY	20	Vincent Tong	Foster City, CA	—
Ty Holcomb V	Vancouver, WA	—	Leroy Traxel	Golden, CO	19
Kimmo Hovi	Kaarina, Finland	18	Martin Trummel	Friedrichsdorf, Germany	—
Alec Hsu	Palo Alto, CA	29	Joel Unger	Santa Barbara, CA	25
David Johnson	Brooklyn Park, MN	29	Patrick Vanbeek	Orlando, FL	23
Dale Kennedy	Toronto, Ontario, Canada	19	Robert Watkins	Sunnyvale, CA	30
Eric Kirkman	Denver, CO	27	Eric Wenokor	Brooklyn, NY	35
Charles Lancaster	Reno, NV	—	Nathan Wildgrube	New York, NY	25
Dennis Lee	Charlotte, NC	26	Paul Wilkens	Tallahassee, FL	25
Darin Leighton	Lubbock, TX	31	Jonathan Willis	Fredrick, MD	20
			Yuri Yoffe	Sudbury, MA	18

Retailer Tournaments Commence in August

by Andy Collins



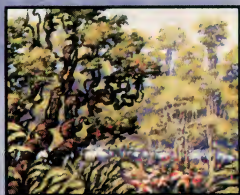
SWAMP



PLAINS



MOUNTAIN



FOREST



ISLAND

In August of 1996, Wizards of the Coast, Inc. will be launching Arena, WotC's official store-based league for **Magic: The Gathering**®. Arena will allow **Magic** players to duel in a variety of standardized environments. A national ranking system will allow competing players to see how they compare with fellow Arena participants, and unique, exciting prizes will appeal to all those involved.

Arena is part of WotC's goal to promote **Magic** as an "intellectual sport" akin to chess. Unlike the high-level play of the Pro Tour circuit, however, Arena supplies **Magic** players with a grassroots-level proving ground, allowing them to hone their skills in a controlled setting. Ultimately, WotC hopes to use Arena as a "qualifying step" for some players on the road to professional tournaments.

Peter Adkison, president of Wizards of the Coast, sees Arena as achieving three goals: First, it supports the "meta-game" of **Magic**—those elements beyond simply playing cards and counting life points. Second, it helps the retailer, as stores involved in Arena enjoy improved communication with WotC and increased traffic and sales associated with league play. Third, Arena allows WotC to achieve closer contact with its customers, leading to a stronger product.

League play has always been a high priority for WotC. Adkison believes that tournaments and leagues are "the best ways" of playing **Magic**. Richard Garfield, creator of **Magic: The Gathering**, notes that "we take limited-environment play very seriously."

Prizes for Arena will include alternative-art versions of popular cards from **Magic**; giveaways will include alternative-art land cards. All of these cards will be exclusive to Arena, available only to those participating in the league.

Arena is being tested by WotC in Seattle, Tacoma, and Olympia (all Washington sites), as well as Albuquerque, New Mexico. According to Rob Voce, director of Strategic Projects in WotC's Events division, these tests have been "incredibly successful," renewing excitement around in-store **Magic** play.

One of WotC's test sites is a retail shop called

Games & Gizmos located in Seattle's Capitol Hill district. Assistant store manager Kurt Auchberger has noticed increased foot traffic as a result of the lure of organized play.

"The majority of play here is friendly, but once we started the retail [Arena] league you could see the level of intensity rise," he said. "We don't really make any money off of the local tournaments, it's just something that we do to get people to play **Magic**. And if they do come in here for the tournaments, chances are they'll buy some cards here too."

In its August nationwide launch, Arena will include ten metropolitan areas: Albuquerque, New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Boston, Dallas, Atlanta, and Seattle. Approximately every two months,



Arena prizes include alternative-art versions of popular cards.

another ten cities will be added until the league covers the nation from coast to coast. Future plans include international expansion until, in the words of Adkison, Arena will be "everywhere: fully automated, instant feedback, worldwide."

Arena will run in play cycles of approximately five weeks, with formats including Type II, Sealed Deck, and draft, with new formats being tested as well.

Players in cities included in Arena can contact their local retailers about participating in the league. Retailers should call the WotC Merchant Relations team for additional information: East Central United States or Canada (Adrian Swartout at 206-204-7643); Western U.S. (Jillian Sutter at 206-204-7642); Eastern U.S. (Shane DeFreest at 206-204-7641); and Central U.S. (Wendy Wallace at 206-204-7647). Or simply send email to league@wizards.com to request inclusion in Arena. More information, including scheduled formats, rules, and play tips, is available on the WotC website (<http://www.wizards.com>). ■

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With the debut of Wizards of the Coast's **Magic: The Gathering Pro Tour™** comes a brand-new publication: *The Duelist Sideboard*, WotC's official, 32-page, four-color magazine for organized play. The perfect complement to *The Duelist*, the industry's current leader in card game strategies, *The Duelist Sideboard* brings **Magic** followers all the latest professional tournament news, rules, results, photos, and player profiles.

From the first professional tournament held in New York City last February to the sixth and final stop on WotC's Pro Tour schedule in Dallas this November, *The Duelist Sideboard* provides readers with the inside scoop on top players, hotly-contested matches, and emerging talent. Coverage includes championship match recaps, descriptions of winning strategies and deck recipes, tips on prepping for tournament play, news of format changes for upcoming tournaments, Arena league updates, and current DCI rankings.

Be sure to pick up a copy of the premiere issue of *The Duelist Sideboard* at the next Pro Tour event!

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How Do I Qualify for the \$1,000,000 Magic: The Gathering® Pro Tour™?

By Kevin Klipstein

Tap into the fast-paced action of qualifier tournaments and test your Magic skills against other area players for the chance to compete in the Pro Tour. Play for fun, play for prizes, or play for your chance at the big money. Qualifier tournaments also offer other prizes and tournaments and special merchandise not available in stores. Call Wizards of the Coast® Customer Service at (206) 624-0933 or check out the WotC website at www.wizards.com for a list of qualifier tournaments near you.

In general, competitors qualify for the Pro Tour in the following three ways:

1. Placing in the Top 32 of the previous professional tournament:

Round of 32 (17–32) finishers are invited to the next 1 (one) professional tournament, Round of 16 (9–16) finishers are invited to next 2 (two) professional tournaments, quarterfinalists (5–8) are invited to next 3 (three) professional tournaments, semifinalists (3–4) are invited to next 4 (four) professional tournaments, champion and second-place finishers are invited to next 5 (five) professional tournaments.

2. Ranking at the top in the Duelists' Convocation International™:

The DCI is the official membership and sanctioning organization for Magic: The Gathering. By competing in sanctioned tournaments, DCI members can improve their regional ranking and take one step closer to competing in the

Pro Tour. Players with the Top 25 DCI ranking (list not to include players who already qualified by the first criteria) automatically feed into the Pro Tour. The DCI may take players as deep as the Top 50. The DCI ratings used will most closely mirror the format for that particular professional tournament: Sealed Deck (limited), Type I or Type II (constructed), or appropriate composite rating (limited & Type II or Type I & Type II).

3. Competing in qualifier tournaments:

Qualifier tournaments provide players of all ages the opportunity to compete for invitations to the Pro Tour. Qualifier tournaments precede each professional tournament in regions across North America and around the world. To register for qualifier tournaments in your area, call (800) 324-6496.

Magic: The Gathering Pro Tour Qualifier Tournament Invite Policies:

◆ The top two Open finishers in each qualifier tournament and Junior champion receive an invitation and a travel award to apply to a predetermined upcoming professional tournament.

◆ Each player must indicate the division in which they are competing (players 18 years old and younger must choose to register as a Junior or Open division competitor) prior to the beginning of the tournament. The top eight finishers from each division compete in single-elimination playoffs for prizes and invitations to the Pro Tour.

◆ In the event that a player who wins an invitation to the Pro Tour at a qualifier tournament has already qualified for that particular professional tournament in a previous qualifier tournament or from performance at a previous professional tournament or by being an invited Duelists' Convocation International™ player, the Open or Junior division invitation will be extended to the next top finisher in that qualifier tournament.



Several players who competed in qualifiers placed high at Long Beach.

◆ Players who accrue duplicate invitations to the same professional tournament may not transfer the additional invitation(s) to a future tournament. Wizards of the Coast, Inc. reserves the right to extend invitations to previously qualified participants in the Pro Tour with extenuating circumstances regarding their participation. ■

NEWS

HEADS UP!

Tournament News from around the TCG World

Duelists' Convocation International™ Sanctions Type 1.5

The Duelists' Convocation International (DCI) has announced that the popular "Type 1.5" (subject to name change) tournament format is now included among its sanctioned tournament types. The format attempts to bridge the ever-widening gap between the Type I and Type II formats.

Type 1.5 is basically a Type I tournament with one important difference: all the cards on the Type I and Type II Restricted Lists are added to the Banned List. In essence, it's Type I without most of the "spoiler" cards.

The DCI hopes this addition will offer both **Magic: The Gathering**® veterans and newer players the opportunity to duel in a tournament format both will enjoy.

Land Tax Restricted

The DCI announced that Land Tax has been added to both the Type I and Type II Restricted Lists. The restriction will go into effect on July 1, 1996.

The DCI also announced that from now on it will announce changes to the Type II Banned and Restricted Lists on March 1, June 1, September 1, and December 1 every year. Alterations to the Type I Banned and Restricted Lists

will be announced on March 1 and September 1 every year. The rulings will go into effect one month after each announcement.

From the DCI

Here's some good news for participants on the Pro Tour and its qualifier tournaments: all tournaments in the Pro Tour structure are sanctioned by the DCI, the governing authority for organized, competitive **Magic:**

The Gathering play.

Match results from DCI-sanctioned tournaments become part of the DCI ratings database, and are used to track the performance, rating, and ranking of DCI members around the globe. So, even if a competitor does not win a Pro Tour slot at a

qualifier tournament, his or her match results are still recorded, affecting his or her official DCI rating.

How does this benefit the Pro Tour competitor? A high DCI rating can earn a participant a spot in the Pro Tour—without winning a qualifier tournament. For example, Matt Place (Kansas City, MO) participated in the NYC Pro Tour event, but unfortunately didn't finish high enough to qualify for the Long Beach event. Place played in several qualifier tournaments, but was again edged out. However, Place's official DCI rating positioned him in the Top 25, for which he received an invitation to Long Beach. Tournament competitors who begin establishing an official rating right away will have a decided advantage, since the Top

25-ranked DCI members get invited to every Pro Tour event.

It's easy to become a DCI member. Mana-level membership is available free at any DCI-sanctioned tournament, including qualifier tournaments. Legend-level membership (\$12) is available for those players who want more benefits, helpful hints, and privileges, simply by checking the "upgrade" box on the Mana membership activation forms or by contacting the DCI directly. For membership and sanctioning information, call (206) 204-8032.

Topps Kicks Off Killer Instinct TCG with National Tournament

Trading-card giant Topps, along with Nintendo, has announced it will hold the first annual **Killer Instinct TCG**

National Tournament at GenCon this year, with the grand prize being a **Killer Instinct 2** arcade game. The **Killer Instinct TCG**, Topps' entry into the TCG market, is based on Nintendo's immensely popular **Killer Instinct** arcade video game.

Topps also announced that there will be regional **Killer Instinct** tournaments before the Nationals, with the prize being a trip to GenCon to compete in the National finals. The Eastern Regional is scheduled for July 20 at Neutral Ground in New York City. Details of other regionals have not yet been announced. For additional information, call (212) 376-0544. ■



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